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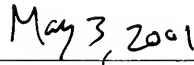
Hippolytus Contaminated: Poetic Misreadings in Racine's Phaedra

A Senior Honors Thesis in the Department of Classics, Sweet Briar College
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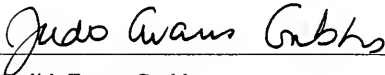
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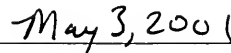
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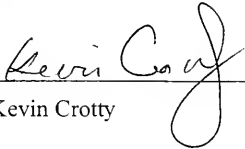
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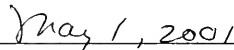
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I. Introduction

In her novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys weaves her story of Antoinette, a young woman driven to insanity by those around her because of their inability to understand her situation. The story is not wholly Rhys' as her character also appears in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, as Bertha.¹ Inspired by Bronte's work, Rhys decided to take the story and rework it. When reading Bronte's novel one becomes attached to the heroine, Jane Eyre, and despises Antoinette, who is the reason Jane and her lover cannot be united. In Bronte's novel, Mr. Rochester is a hero and is perfectly justified in the treatment of his unbalanced wife. But after reading Rhys' novel one can never again read Rochester as the knight-in-shining-armor figure, nor Jane as an ideal heroine. My first impression of Rhys' novel was utter hatred, feeling that in reworking Bronte's story Rhys ruined it. But upon re-examining both works, I find that Rhys did not ruin Bronte's work as I had believed, but on the contrary had enhanced it. Rhys' novel made me look at Bronte's work differently; it forced me to look deeper at the original work and consequently elevated Bronte's novel to a different level. Although both works can and do stand alone, once I read them both it became difficult to separate the two. This is how I also feel regarding Euripides' *Hippolytus*,² for although it can stand alone in its own right and is a magnificent play, subsequent versions inevitably led me to reconsider the original. By reading all the versions of the myth together, each version is enhanced as

¹ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea: Selected Letters*, Ed. By Judith L. Raskin. W.W. Norton & Company, London: 1999 (136).

² I have chosen to use Paul Roche's translation which does not have line numbers, so page numbers are given throughout this text. *Euripides' Ten Plays* Trans. Paul Roche. New York: Cambridge University, 1986.

perspective changes and widen. Moreover, each version highlights the genius of each playwright more than if one simply reads one of the plays in isolation.

In the prologue to the *Self-Tormentor*, Terence addresses the accusations hurled at him; his audience and critics claimed that by using multiple Greek stories he was ‘spoiling’ the original works.³ The actor continues the prologue with his plea, asking that the audience “be fair to authors, and when they give you the opportunity to see something new and free from faults, give them in return a chance to get on in the world.”⁴ The Latin term for ‘spoiling’ the play is *contaminatio*; Terence is being accused of mixing and thus contaminating the original works by reworking them and making them his own. Racine and Seneca are in a way equally guilty of ‘spoiling’ Euripides’ play. However, if both Racine and Seneca are guilty of spoiling his original work, Euripides himself is also guilty of this offense. By rewriting his *Hippolytus Veiled* and making it *Hippolytus Garlanded*, Euripides contaminates his original version. Hanna Roisman argues that Euripides might assume that his audience will link *Hippolytus Garlanded* with his previous version, so he is contaminating both of his plays for each will influence the response to the other.⁵

In Euripides’ *Hippolytus Veiled*, it is assumed that Phaedra confronted Hippolytus with her lust for him, whereupon he felt so ashamed that he was forced to cover his head. Barrett believes that the Athenian audience disapproved of this outlandish sexual behavior from a woman in this first version of the play.⁶ Although scholars debate the reason behind the rewriting of the play, Euripides nonetheless did change this play so that

³ Terence, *The Comedies*. Edited And Translated By Betty Radice. Penguin Books, New York, 1976 (101).

⁴ Terence (102).

⁵ Roisman, Hanna M. Nothing Is As It Seems: The Tragedy of the Implicit in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1999 (5).

it won the approval of his audience. Critics assume that Phaedra approached Hippolytus in the first play, as Euripides is exceedingly careful in his second version to have the Nurse perform this act. Roisman questions this assumption made concerning *Hippolytus Veiled*. Roisman cites Roman depictions of the play where the Nurse delivers a letter from Phaedra to Hippolytus as evidence, but, as Roisman observes, these drawings could represent Sophocles' *Phaedra*.⁷ She also argues that a direct confrontation between Phaedra and Hippolytus would have been difficult to perform using the masks. Lattimore argues that the scene between Phaedra and Hippolytus did in fact take place, but that there was something more than this scene which enraged the Greek audience.⁸ Roisman builds on this argument to suggest exactly what else could have happened.⁹ She, along with others, proposes that not only did Phaedra try to seduce Hippolytus, but she went so far as to offer him the throne.¹⁰

But perhaps the most interesting part of Roisman's argument is where she suggests that Phaedra's efforts to seduce and offer Hippolytus the throne are not enough to force him to cover himself. Hippolytus may have contemplated or fantasized about relations with his stepmother. It may also recall Aristophanes' portrayal of Phaedra as a prostitute; perhaps Hippolytus did have relations with Phaedra.¹¹ Because we have so little information about Euripides' *Hippolytus Veiled*, scholars are scrambling to fill in

⁶ Barrett, W. S. *Euripides, Hippolytus*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964 (12).

⁷ Roisman (23).

⁸ Lattimore, R. *Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964.

⁹ Roisman (Chapter 1).

¹⁰ Here Roisman also observes that Racine and Seneca allude to Phaedra giving the throne to Hippolytus. I believe it is going too far to assume Euripides' Phaedra went so far as to offer the throne to her stepson, although it is possible. I think that here the later versions have influenced the reading of Hippolytus. That is not to say that Euripides' Phaedra did not or could not have offered the throne to her stepson, for we can not be certain. Since the later versions incorporate this theme, it seems that perhaps we are allowing their influence to overtake what we know and do not know about Euripides' version. (12).

the missing pieces; however, one must ask how much of what they are assuming is taken from Euripides and how much is influenced by the later writers?

II. Reasons for Racine Misreading Euripides

Harold Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, discusses the theories involving the blindness of poets towards the work of their precursors. Bloom says that “Oedipus, blind, was on the path to oracular godhood, and the strong poets have followed him by transforming their blindness toward their precursors into the revisionary insights of their own work.”¹² That is, later poets are predisposed to misread the earlier poets, which in turn influences the later poets’ own work. Because poets misread previous poets, they are inspired by elements in the poems which the earlier poet did not intend. Furthermore, in my opinion, poets not only misread their predecessors but they tend also to misread themselves. We can find similar statements in philosophy. For instance, in discussing Plato’s concept of *ideas*, Immanuel Kant says the following:

“I shall not engage here in any literary enquiry into the meaning which this illustrious philosopher attached to the expression. I need only remark that it is by no means unusual, upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject, whether in ordinary conversation or in writing, to find that we understand him better than he has understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention.”¹³

The well-known literary theorist Paul de Man has written on the tendency for authors and critics to misread their own texts. In his influential essay entitled “The Rhetoric of Blindness,” de Man says the following: “The reader is given the elements to decipher the

¹¹ Roisman. But again how much of this reading is a ‘pure’ or ‘innocent’ reading of Euripides’ Hippolytus? This seems to follow Racine’s plot in that Hippolytus had committed some crime where he was guilty of loving someone; here Phaedra seems to replace Aricia. (15-16).

¹² Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 1973 (10).

¹³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith. MacMillan and Co., London, 1926 (310).

real plot hidden behind the pseudo-plot, but the author himself remains deluded.”¹⁴ In this essay de Man goes on to say “Our readings have revealed even more than this: not only does the critic say something that the work does not say, but he even says something that he himself does not mean to say.”¹⁵ Furthermore, de Man argues that “Critics’ moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight.”¹⁶ On the topic of blindness and insight, de Man says the following:

“It seems, however, that this insight could only be gained because the critics were in the grip of this peculiar blindness: their language could grope toward a certain degree of insight only because their method remained oblivious to the perception of this insight. The insight exists only for a reader in the privileged position of being able to observe the blindness as a phenomenon in its own right—the question of his own blindness being one which he is by definition incompetent to ask—and so being able to distinguish between statement and meaning.”¹⁷

Ultimately, Racine in *Phaedra*¹⁸ believes that his play takes one direction, but in fact it takes another.¹⁹

Unlike Euripides or Seneca, Racine wrote a preface to *Phaedra*, which explains the direction he wanted his play and his characters to assume. His vision of what *Phaedra*²⁰ should mean to the audience is not left for us to speculate upon because he informs the reader of this in the Forward. Interestingly, his conception of his play does

¹⁴ de Man, Paul, *Blindness and Insight* (Oxford University Press, 1971) (104).

¹⁵ de Man, from *The Rhetoric of Blindness* (109).

¹⁶ de Man, *The Rhetoric of Blindness* (109).

¹⁷ de Man, *The Rhetoric of Blindness* (106).

¹⁸ I have chosen to use Richard Wilbur’s translation which also does not have line numbers, so pages will be indicated. Racine, Jean. *Phaedra*. Trans. Richard Wilbur. New York, Harvest: 1986.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that de Man also says “To write critically about critics thus becomes a way to reflect on the paradoxical effectiveness of a blinded vision that has to be rectified by means of insights that it unwittingly provides.” (106).

²⁰ Turnell, Martin. *Jean Racine Dramatist*. New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1972.

not fit with what he accomplishes. In Richard Wilbur's introduction to the play, he explains the shift in Racine's life from a courtier who encompassed a "laissez-faire" attitude concerning life, love, and art to a man devoted to religion and his role as Louis XIV's historiographer. Written in 1677, *Phaedra* was Racine's last play, with the exception of two religious plays, which he was requested to write.²¹ As Wilbur says, the shift in Racine's lifestyle can be detected in *Phaedra* when contrasted with his earlier works, which were not as focused on virtue. Even Racine himself admits that this play revolves around the virtuous ways of characters, a theme which his other works do not seriously engage.²² Racine attempted to make Phaedra a less despicable character by depicting the Nurse as the more evil of the two.²³ Racine also attempts to make Theseus a more sympathetic character in the eyes of the audience by altering the scene where Theseus hurls the accusation at his son.²⁴ Ironically, in these two aspects Racine fails to accomplish what he claims he intended. Moreover, it is really Euripides who does a far better job of accomplishing Racine's objectives. As Bloom states in his essay,

"But the poem is now held open to the precursor, where it once was open, and the uncanny effect is that the new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as the later poet himself had written the precursor's original work."²⁵

The one character that Racine does paint in the light he intended is Hippolytus. In his play Racine wishes to make Hippolytus a character who would be pitied by the audience, for he felt that Euripides' Hippolytus was flawless to the point where he could not

He discusses the importance of night and day in Racine's play. This is not an important factor in the Euripides' version, although both versions do take place over the course of one day.

²¹ Wilbur (ix).

²² Racine (5).

²³ Racine (3).

²⁴ Racine (4).

²⁵ Bloom (16).

capture the audience's compassion.²⁶ By introducing Aricia to the play and Hippolytus' forbidden love for her, he creates a human foible or flaw in the youth. Here, he succeeds in accomplishing his objective; Hippolytus does become a more likable, sympathetic character. As for anyone reading more than one version of the play, Racine in his readings of both Euripides and Seneca's versions becomes influenced even while trying to describe his own play. That is, in being introduced to the two different versions of the play Racine cannot have a pure, innocent reading of either. Moreover, he only accomplished his goal when he allows his work to show the direct influence of the other plays.

One explanation for Racine's misreading of Euripides is, as Bloom says, that one is always predisposed to misread precursors. However, another reason why Racine might misread this play is because he does not understand Greek tragedy and all that it entails. I will now give a brief sketch of the cultural context of Greek tragedy. Although the origins of tragedy are essentially irrecoverable, many scholars believe that theatre emerged from ritual, which would explain why Greek theatre was so rooted in ceremony. A trip to the theatre in ancient Greece was nothing like a night on Broadway, or going to a play in seventeenth century France either. There were certain times of the year when the plays were sponsored by the state as part of a festival and so one could not simply go whenever it was desirable to do so. In fact, most of the plays were only ever performed once. The most prominent festival was called the 'City Dionysia' where three government-selected playwrights would each present three tragedies and one satyr play. The involvement of both religion and the government in these productions is difficult for modern audiences to grasp. According to Simon Goldhill, the festivals contained

²⁶ Racine (4).

“specific ceremonies, procession, and priestly doings that form an essential and unique context form the production of the Greek drama and which do indeed importantly affect the entertainment.”²⁷ It is particularly interesting and paradoxical that while the plays were part of a state-sponsored event the themes were not always complimentary to the state.

The playwrights were selected almost a year in advance. Eventually a lottery emerged where actors and flute players were randomly assigned to playwrights in order to ensure fairness. The contest was prestigious and became ever more advanced and complicated. The festival was an important civic event for Athens, as the city would use the festival in part as a means of propaganda to promote itself. It flaunted its wealth and power to the audiences, gaining respect and support from its citizens. It is important to note that the audience also included not only citizens of Athens but metics (resident aliens) as well as guest from other city-states. The festivals evolved in such a way that they eventually became a way for the aristocratic rulers to display their wealth and impose their values on the people.²⁸

Another element that is not present in our modern day theatre is the religious element. Dionysus has many controversies attached to his image; the modern interpretations tend to associate him more with savagery and violence. Although he was the god of theatre, there was a saying in ancient Greece ‘nothing to do with Dionysus.’ There is much debate over this simple saying, as scholars are unsure of its exact meaning. Was it sarcastic? Was it questioning? Was it a joke? Unfortunately, we can only guess. Nietzsche suggests in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the ancients were wrong in this

²⁷ Goldhill, Simon. *Reading Greek Tragedy*. New York: Cambridge University, 1986 (98).

statement and that the festival had everything to do with Dionysus. Nietzsche believes that tragedy was basically a ritual devoted to Dionysus. Carrying forth Nietzsche's observations, other scholars, known as ritualists, claimed that each play was itself a ritual. Murray in his analysis argued that each tragic hero was actually a substitute for the dying Dionysus. Although these theories were later dismissed, they are still quite interesting to examine, and there has been a resurgence of interest recently in the place of religious and civic ritual in the productions of tragedy.²⁹

In his article Friedrich suggests that Dionysus perhaps became the god of theatre through his association with masks. Dionysus was indeed worshiped in the form of a mask. However, Friedrich states that a more likely theory would be that Dionysus' ritual was more complex than the rituals of other gods, and as theatre is also more involved it became associated with him as well. Also, it has been suggested that the very structure of his rituals helped to establish him as the god of the theatre.³⁰ Whatever the reason behind the beginning of the ritual, the festival did come to revolve around Dionysus.

The City Dionysia was an urban festival transformed by Peisistratus, a ruling tyrant of Athens in sixth century BCE.³¹ Eventually the festival evolved to become a formalized and prestigious event. A total of 1,250 artists and performers would participate each year in the festival.³²

The dithyrambic competitions required ten to twenty poets, and as many choregoi, 500 men and 500 boys who made up the twenty choruses, and twenty aulos-players. For the tragic contests, there were three poets, three choregoi, three aulos-players, thirty-six

²⁸ *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Ed. By Csapo, Eric and William J. Slater. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998 (103-104).

²⁹ Friedrich, Rainer. *Tragedy and the Tragic*. Edited by M. S. Silk. Oxford University Press, 1999.

³⁰ Friedrich.

³¹ Csapo and Slater. (104).

³² Rehm, Rush. *Greek Tragic Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1998 (29).

to forty-five chorus members, and nine actors (plus supernumeraries and supplemental choruses when necessary)³³

To these numbers we add the comedic performers plus builders, trainers, and those who would work behind the scenes. The festival would take place in March and would draw crowds from neighboring city-states, or *poleis*. The overseer of the opening and closing of the festival was the *archon eponymous* who was one of the nine leaders selected each year. He served with two other appointed officials, the military commander (Polemarch) and the person in charge of religious festivals (*archon basileus*). Part of the *eponymous*' duty was to appoint the *choregoi*, the financial producers. Eight choregoi were needed in order to produce the dramatic festival as each tragedian received one sponsor, as did the five writers of the comedies. From the different tribes of people the *choregoi* were selected to sponsor the dithyrambs.³⁴ The *choregos* received credit if his sponsored event won the contest.

The festival itself occurred in March and lasted five days. On the first day the Athenians would carry the statue of Dionysus through the city. This day was also an opportunity for them to display their wealth and tribute money to other cities. The second day the chorus of fifty boys would perform five dithyrambs. On the third day a chorus of men would perform the five dithyrambs. Over the next three days each tragedian would have his own day where he would produce three tragedies and one satyr play. At the end of each day there would be one comedy performed.

In judging the event, it is important to note that although the *choregos* and the playwright both won prizes, a single vote determined both. The state ensured that the contest would be fair and took nominations from each tribe for the judges. The names of

³³ Rehm (29).

³⁴ Rehm (20).

eligible candidates were put into a pool, sealed, and then before the contests began the names of the judges were drawn. The judges would then move to a separate, reserved part of the theatre. It is unclear if the same judges presided over all of the contest or whether new ones were chosen; also the exact number of judges chose is uncertain.

As for the actors who performed in the plays, they were amateurs not professionals. Doubling, where one actor would play at least more than one role, was used when producing the plays. Because of the incorporation of the masks in the productions, much emphasis was placed on the actors' voice. There are fragments of texts that suggest that the diction changes from character to character, making it easier for the actors performing and for the audience watching.³⁵ Including the practice of doubling created an interesting dynamic, as the playwrights could put an interesting twist on the characters and their relationships to one another. For example in *Hippolytus* the same actor could play the lustful Phaedra and pure Hippolytus.

The plays were structured very simply, beginning normally with the prologue. Typically in the prologue one character would give the background information and exposition needed for the audience. Following the prologue, or sometimes beginning the play, would be the *parodos*. In the *parodos* the chorus is introduced and the mood is set; it also provides more or in some cases all the background. The episodes follow with the stasima woven in between each; normally there are three to six episodes in a play where the dramatic action occurs. Ending the play is the *exodos*, where all the choral members and characters depart.

If Racine did not understand Greek drama as it is presented in this kind of historical context, then he was predisposed to misread Euripides and his play. We cannot

be certain of what Racine knew about tragedy. He was educated and well versed in the Classics, but we cannot be certain of the extent of his knowledge. It seems that in his Preface he does not address the staging differences between his play and Euripides, so perhaps he did not feel that they were important. If this is true and he overlooked the context of Greek drama, then this is yet another reason why Racine misread Euripides. Another problem with Racine's interpretation of Euripides involves the theme of virtue. Racine says in his Preface to his play that his play revolves around virtue. In extant Greek tragedy this is not an obvious way to interpret the plays; for example consider the actions of characters such as Clytemnestra, Medea, and Ajax and how they are depicted in Athenian tragedy. Perhaps Racine is predisposed to read the theme of virtue in this play, as he, himself, is moving towards religion. Whatever the reason for importing this theme of virtue into the plays, it does constitute a misreading of Euripides.

III. Phaedra and The Nurse/Phaedra and Oenone

In reading Seneca's play Racine is exposed to the blatantly evil Phaedra,³⁶ consequently he cannot disassociate her from the purer character who appears in Euripides' play.³⁷ Although in Seneca's work Phaedra's accusation of Hippolytus is frightfully more cruel, Racine views it and the Euripidean Phaedra as equally malicious because of their act.³⁸ Racine sees their accusation of Hippolytus as foul and immoral; therefore, in his version he has Oenone³⁹ commit this crime because it is more suited to a

³⁵ Rehm, (50).

³⁶ In his chapter Turnell discusses the unconscious complexities of the play, particularly the repressed feelings and the guilt of Phaedra (239-240).

³⁷ For a discussion on who Euripides' play is really about, which character see: Knox, Bernard. "The Hippolytus of Euripides" ed. By Erich Segal, Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy (311).

³⁸ Racine (3).

³⁹ Weinberg, Bernard. *The Art of Jean Racine*. The University of Chicago Press: 1969. Here Weinberg argues that Oenone is a counterpart to Phaedra (286, 297).

Nurse than a princess.⁴⁰ However, Phaedra attempts to seduce Hippolytus in Racine's version. In Euripides' play the Nurse tries to entice Hippolytus into an affair with her mistress, whereas in both the Seneca and Racine versions Phaedra does so herself. The Phaedra of *Hippolytus*⁴¹ is innocent of committing any physical crime, as it is the Nurse who acts as the catalyst in the situation.⁴² Phaedra's only crime is when she accuses Hippolytus in the letter after the Nurse has divulged the truth. The Euripidean Phaedra casts her horrible accusation in reaction to her Nurse's crime; desperately she tries to save her reputation for her children. In this play the accusation is made in order to protect her children. Racine's Phaedra allows the accusation to be leveled at Hippolytus because she is motivated by jealousy - she is the woman scorned. Whereas Hanna Roisman argues that Euripides' Phaedra manipulates the Nurse to seduce Hippolytus for her, it is really Racine's Phaedra who manipulates her nurse to do her bidding.⁴³ Therefore, in my estimation, it is the Euripidean Phaedra who becomes the most virtuous figure, followed by Racine's, then Seneca's. Although Racine states that his "Phaedra is, in fact, neither wholly guilty nor wholly innocent," in truth she is wholly guilty in his play.⁴⁴ Although he believes that by not having her utter the accusation of Hippolytus she becomes a

⁴⁰ Racine. It is interesting to note that Racine gives both the Nurse and the Messenger/Retainer names in his play as this seems to humanize them and make them more complete characters. At the same time, Racine has a very set class distinction, commenting that the queen could never commit a deplorable crime but a nurse certainly could. (4).

⁴¹ Zeitlin, Froma. "*The Power of Aphrodite: Eros and the Boundaries of the Self in the Hippolytus*" ed. Peter Burian. *Directions in Euripidean Criticism*. Duke University Press: Durham, 1985. Zeitlin argues that Phaedra is the paragon of female virtue as she seeks to repress her desires (52-53). Note that Racine's Phaedra does not try to repress her desires.

⁴² For an interesting feminist reading of the Nurse and other characters in the play, see Nancy Rabinowitz' *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*. (Cornell University Press, 1993), especially chapters 5 and 6.

⁴³ Roisman says that Phaedra is in total control of the scenes as she makes herself appear weak to the Nurse so that the Nurse will take control. Whereas Roisman believes that Euripides' Phaedra is manipulative (and she is by accusing Hippolytus in the letter) she does not manipulate the Nurse. Racine's Phaedra is the character that is the true manipulator up until the end of the play. (xii).

⁴⁴ Racine (3).

character manipulated by fate and the gods, that is simply not the case. In her scene with Hippolytus, Phaedra actively tries to seduce him. Contrary to what Racine believes, he has made a Phaedra who is even more “odious” than the Euripidean character.⁴⁵

Racine attempts to portray Phaedra in a more positive, noble light where she is torn between her love of Hippolytus and her sense of honor and virtue.⁴⁶ However, this is not what Racine accomplishes in his play, but rather it is just the opposite. Euripides’ Phaedra is in fact the character who is the most virtuous character in all the plays. In Euripides’ play Phaedra is upset when her Nurse makes a reference to Hippolytus.⁴⁷ But in Racine’s version Phaedra is not weakened by this news which upsets her, she is angered by Oenone’s mention of his name.⁴⁸ Despite what Roisman argues, the Euripidean Phaedra is gentle and truly weakened by her state; whereas Racine’s Phaedra is enraged while simultaneously professing that she is weak, she does not appear weak by her actions.⁴⁹ Euripides makes it clear to the audience that the Nurse has tried for a long time to pry the cause of Phaedra’s condition from her mistress’ lips.⁵⁰ But Oenone only asks once why Phaedra is suffering before Phaedra laments. The Nurse in *Hippolytus* is reduced to forcing the secret from her mistress by using physical strength before the secret is divulged.⁵¹ Euripides’ Phaedra clearly does not want to reveal her secret, but Phaedra in Racine reveals her darkest secret all too easily. It seems that Racine’s Phaedra

⁴⁵ Racine refers to the Euripidean Phaedra is odious. (3).

⁴⁶ Zeitlin says in her article that Euripides’ Phaedra is simply a means to an end, as Aphrodite uses her to accomplish her goal of destroying Hippolytus. By eliminating Aphrodite’s role in the tragedy more guilt falls on Phaedra. In Euripides’ play Phaedra shares the guilt with Aphrodite, and since Aphrodite manipulates and uses her, presumably Phaedra could not go against her (Aphrodite’s) will. But in Racine’s play, there is no god to manipulate Phaedra as Phaedra is more the subject of her own free will. Therefore, while Euripides’ Phaedra shares her guilt with a goddess, as Zeitlin suggests, Racine’s Phaedra bears full responsibility herself for her actions. (56).

⁴⁷ Euripides (58).

⁴⁸ Racine (19).

⁴⁹ Roisman (50-54).

wanted to tell Oenone so that she could engage the woman's help but Euripides' Phaedra wanted to keep her secret to herself.⁵² Roisman argues that Phaedra is easily overtaken by the Nurse compared to the physical struggle between the Nurse and Hippolytus. However, this comparison is based on Roisman's argument that Phaedra is not weak in this situation. Given that Phaedra's illness has indeed weakened her, it seems obvious that Hippolytus would be better able to defend himself. After all, Hippolytus is a huntsman where Phaedra is the weakened queen.⁵³

Although both Phaedras claim that they tried to overcome their love, it is the Euripidean character who is more adamant about killing herself. Euripides has his Phaedra mention three times how her love is disgracing her children and husband while talking with the Nurse and the chorus.⁵⁴ However, in the same scene Racine's Phaedra never mentions the disgrace that her husband or children might suffer as the result of her emotions. Here Euripides' Phaedra seems to genuinely care for both her children and her husband, where Racine's Phaedra is caught up in her own feelings (and she casts aside any and all feelings for Theseus, Oenone, and her children.) Racine's Phaedra appears heartless in another respect in this scene. Oenone tells her mistress that if she chooses to die, then it is her wish to kill herself and die with Phaedra. In response to this statement, Phaedra does not even acknowledge this profession of loyalty and love.⁵⁵ But the Phaedra in *Hippolytus* does care deeply for her Nurse; this Phaedra does not want to bring her Nurse down with her for she does not wish to share her doom.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Euripides (54-59).

⁵¹ Euripides (59).

⁵² Roisman, (67-68).

⁵³ Racine (67-68).

⁵⁴ Euripides (59, 62).

⁵⁵ Racine (20).

⁵⁶ Euripides, (59).

After the confession⁵⁷ in Racine's play, Phaedra tells Oenone that now, having confessed, she must die, but before she does she says "Provided that you do not, as death draws near, pour more unjust reproaches in my ear, or seek once more in vain to fan a fire which flickers and is ready to expire."⁵⁸ In the last line one could argue that she is referring to her death, that Oenone must not try to convince her not to kill herself; that she must not discourage her from letting the fire which is her life burn out. However, if we view her as the manipulative character that she is, Phaedra is here hinting that Oenone should not reproach her for her love of Hippolytus anymore, and should even try to find a way to fan the fire of love between herself and Hippolytus. Here Phaedra gives Oenone two options, plants two seeds: either Oenone can believe that Phaedra is wicked for having such a love (which Phaedra would know would not be the case because Oenone's love for her is blind) or she can help her build the fiery passion between herself and Hippolytus. This Phaedra is manipulative. She wants Oenone to encourage her love and also to help her win Hippolytus.

Although Roisman argues that the Phaedra in *Hippolytus* is much the same way, her view of this scene is controversial and not widely accepted, as she herself admits.⁵⁹ Phaedra wants her Nurse to use a potion to cure her of this disease, for her only other option is death.⁶⁰ This Phaedra believes that "words should not be used to seduce, but to foster virtue."⁶¹ She did not manipulate her Nurse; she clearly states what she wants her Nurse to do, which is to rescue her from her "disgusting" love.⁶² As Karydas explains,

⁵⁷ To see an analysis of the increase in Phaedra's guilt, see Weinberg.

⁵⁸ Racine (24).

⁵⁹ Roisman (xi.).

⁶⁰ Euripides (65).

⁶¹ Euripides (64).

⁶² Euripides (65).

the Nurse's role has many different levels, perhaps most importantly the role of playing a mother figure to Phaedra.⁶³ If the Nurse is in control of the situation as Karydas explains, then she could not be the subject of manipulation, as Roisman assumes.

After Phaedra's confession in Racine's play, Panope enters to tell of Theseus' alleged death. This enables Oenone to rationalize Phaedra's love; for now, Oenone says that Phaedra need not be ashamed of her love any longer because she is widowed and free from the bonds of marriage. Phaedra offers no objections to Oenone's description of her newfound situation. Phaedra says that she will be led by her nurse's advice, if she can "come back from the dead, and if my mother-love still has the power to rouse my weakened spirits."⁶⁴ As Oenone has also emphasized, it is important for Phaedra to remember her son in order to ensure his position as the heir to the throne. However, Phaedra admits in the line above that she is having problems focusing on her duties as a mother. Here, there is a striking difference between the two Phaedras; again Euripides' Phaedra is concerned with her family where Racine's Phaedra thinks little of her son. In fact, Oenone has to remind Phaedra before her meeting with Hippolytus to remember her son.⁶⁵

Racine's Phaedra does not remember her son until it is too late. Her lust for Hippolytus is so strong that simply being in his presence makes her confess her love for him. Her confession, however, is very subtle in the beginning. Hippolytus tries to console Phaedra over the loss of her husband, saying that he might well still be alive.⁶⁶

⁶³ Karydas, Helen Pournarna. *Eurycleia and her Successors: Female Figures of Authority in Greek Poetics*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. Karydas argues that the Nurse wavers between respecting her 'mistress' and treating Phaedra as a child. Ultimately, however, Karydas says that the Nurse takes over the situation, handling it as if Phaedra were her child (123).

⁶⁴ Racine (28).

⁶⁵ Racine (43).

⁶⁶ Racine (45).

Phaedra does not care for this idea because she is focused on seducing Hippolytus. Phaedra's lack of compassion towards her husband demonstrates what a cold, calculated character she really is. She cares not whether her husband lives or dies, but is focused on her seduction of Hippolytus. Her callous personality is further demonstrated as she describes her lust and desire for Theseus to Hippolytus, when she is actually using Theseus⁶⁷ to describe her lust for Hippolytus.⁶⁸ Phaedra becomes carried away with her passion to the point where it is obvious that Theseus is no longer her object of desire. When Hippolytus realizes her true meaning he is shocked by this turn of events, and reminds Phaedra of their relationship to Theseus and the inappropriateness of her statement. Momentarily Phaedra claims that he had misunderstood her intentions; Hippolytus, half-heartedly convinced tries to excuse himself. However, Phaedra is determined to make her declaration of love, so she detains him and confesses. She tells of how she tried to fight her love, but has failed. When her words don't appear to sway Hippolytus⁶⁹ she uses her son as a means to explain her confession: "anxious for a son I dared not fail, I came to beg you not to hate him."⁷⁰ But Phaedra is not concerned with her son here; she is using her son as an excuse that enables her to profess her love. Moreover, the language she uses speaks more of her sexual desire for Hippolytus, than of any real love she has for him. Her language is so sexual (to the point of vulgarity) that she cannot remain the Phaedra Racine has envisioned "Here is my heart, your blade must pierce me there...my heart already leaps to meet your thrust...strike then...refuse me

⁶⁷ Here Phaedra is describing her passions for Theseus by using his name. However, in her speech she becomes swept away to the point that it is clear that she is not describing Theseus, but is actually describing her lust for Hippolytus.

⁶⁸ Racine (45).

⁶⁹ At this point Phaedra has confessed her love only to have it rejected. In order to succeed with Hippolytus she tries a different route, using her son and the crown.

⁷⁰ Racine (47).

such a blow, so sweet a pain, if you'll not stain your hand with my abhorred and tainted blood, lend me least your sword. Give it to me!"⁷¹ Although Roisman continues to argue that Euripides' Phaedra is manipulative, Racine's Phaedra seems to be the one who is manipulative.

No such sexual scene appears in the extant version of Euripides' play. Phaedra is too weak and ashamed of her love even to consider confronting him. The scene where Hippolytus is confronted with the fact the Phaedra is in love with him takes place off stage, so that the audience never knows the manner in which the Nurse presents Phaedra's case. The Nurse is aware of how delicate the situation is, and therefore it can be assumed that she would not be as bold in her speech to Hippolytus as Phaedra in Racine's play was.⁷² Euripides' Nurse wants to keep the situation as quiet as possible; she even tries to convince Hippolytus that everyone makes mistakes.⁷³ Racine's Phaedra does not make this attempt to ask his forgiveness, while the Nurse seems to indicate that he should be understanding and forgiving of Phaedra's situation. Upon hearing the scene between her Nurse and Hippolytus, the Euripidean Phaedra chastises her Nurse for committing such a crime. Hearing this she dismisses the Nurse from her presence; this time Phaedra is determined to carry out her initial play. This Phaedra decides that she has no other course of action but to kill herself and save her family from disgrace.⁷⁴

Racine's Phaedra comes to no such realization after the confession scene with Hippolytus; rather, this Phaedra still hopes that Hippolytus can be seduced into loving

⁷¹ Racine (48).

⁷² Karaydas points out that the Nurse does succeed in getting Hippolytus to remain quiet about the secret he has heard. Roisman (68) argues that Hippolytus is stronger. Both Phaedra and Hippolytus are tricked by the Nurse's words into doing what she wishes while the Nurse plays on Phaedra's weakness to achieve what she thinks Phaedra needs. She also plays on Hippolytus' sense of honor to keep him quiet.

⁷³ Euripides (69).

⁷⁴ Euripides (73).

her.⁷⁵ When Racine's Phaedra accuses Oenone of betrayal, Oenone does not admit that she did any wrong deeds. In this scene Phaedra does not accuse Oenone of seducing Hippolytus for her but she chastises Oenone for the advice she gave and for the lies she told. Phaedra does not admit any fault of her own in this play.⁷⁶ The Nurse in *Hippolytus* admits her mistake and begs to be forgiven, for she did more than offer advice, she took an active role.⁷⁷ Oenone in the same scene cannot understand why Phaedra would be attracted to him for "his arrogance was rude and raw! Why did Phaedra not see the man I saw?"⁷⁸ Rather than agree with Oenone and admit her mistake, Racine's Phaedra defends Hippolytus, claiming that "it was the surprise that made him mute, and we do wrong to take him for a brute."⁷⁹ Racine's Phaedra is still so overpowered by her love for Hippolytus that even when confronted with the truth she cannot see clearly. In her madness⁸⁰ Racine's Phaedra asks Oenone to "serve my madness, not my reason" demonstrating how Phaedra is selfishly pursuing this love despite its effects on her family.⁸¹ Phaedra is willing to try anything to win Hippolytus; she even goes so far as to say she wants to "dangle the crown before him" so that perhaps Hippolytus could even "play for him [Phaedra's son] a father's role."⁸² Phaedra will stop at nothing in pursuit of what she wants and so she sends Oenone to "sway him...by every wile that's known: your words will please him better than my own. Sigh, groan, harangue him; picture me as dying; make use of supplication and of crying; I'll sanction all you say. Go. I shall

⁷⁵ Racine (55).

⁷⁶ Racine (84-85).

⁷⁷ Euripides (73).

⁷⁸ Racine (55).

⁷⁹ Racine (55).

⁸⁰ Turnell argues that Racine's Phaedra is indeed overtaken by a mental disturbance; however, I believe that this Phaedra's illness is more of a manipulative act. Euripides' Phaedra, on the other hand does seem to suffer from some type of illness (248).

⁸¹ Racine (56).

find when you return, what fate I am assigned.”⁸³ Here Phaedra encourages Oenone to do anything, manipulative or not, in order to win Hippolytus. She, unlike the Phaedra in *Hippolytus*, tells her Nurse to act as a go-between. Not only is Phaedra attempting to manipulate Hippolytus, she is manipulating her nurse.⁸⁴ Clearly, Phaedra is too selfish to see the pain she causes her nurse, or if she does she is cold and does not care.

But Oenone never gets the opportunity to perform the duties her mistress asks, because it is learned that Theseus is not really dead. Learning this, Phaedra realizes that she has behaved wrongly towards him. However, the regret she feels is nothing compared to the guilt Euripides’ Phaedra expressed. Phaedra blames Oenone for leading her down this track, knowing now that she will die disgraced. Phaedra now claims that her only care is for her name that she will leave behind, and for her poor children.⁸⁵ But if her reputation were truly her main concern she would never have confessed her love. Phaedra says that she is ready to die, that she must kill herself in order to save her reputation. Oenone can’t let Phaedra do anything to hurt herself for she cares too much for her mistress. Also, Hippolytus has spurned Phaedra, which Oenone cannot understand because her love for Phaedra blinds her. In order to save her mistress she convinces Phaedra first to charge Hippolytus with a crime. Phaedra does not protest this idea and pleads confusion,⁸⁶ but nonetheless agrees to follow Oenone’s plan.⁸⁷

Before the accusation occurs, Racine’s Phaedra has the opportunity to confess her crime to Theseus, but she does not take advantage of it. She tells him that he has been

⁸² Racine (56).

⁸³ Racine (56).

⁸⁴ Racine, (56).

⁸⁵ Racine (59).

⁸⁶ Turnell argues that Phaedra was tricked into “allowing her to accuse Hippolytus to his father” but this is not the case. Racine’s Phaedra, despite what Racine believes, is the manipulator, not Oenone (244).

⁸⁷ Racine (61).

betrayed, but her wording is quite ambiguous. In retrospect, Theseus believes that she was hinting at Hippolytus' betrayal, for Theseus believes his wife. Knowing Oenone's plot, Phaedra cannot be blind to the fact that her wording could be taken as an accusation against Hippolytus, rather than a hint of her own guilt. This is another instance where Phaedra manipulates the situation.⁸⁸ Unable herself to carry out the accusation of Hippolytus, Phaedra flees the situation, leaving her nurse to do the dirty crime.

When Phaedra next appears on stage, Hippolytus has been accused and has been banished. Apparently, Phaedra is feeling guilty for her part in the crime and is ready to confess to the crime when she learns of Hippolytus' love for Aricia. Overcome with jealousy she cannot utter the truth to Theseus; therefore, she has the opportunity and means of perhaps saving Hippolytus' life but she chooses not to do so.⁸⁹ Next, Phaedra tells Oenone of the love Hippolytus has for Aricia and how it has torn at her heart. But Phaedra is not merely upset, she is furious at this truth claiming that "No, no, their bliss I cannot tolerate, Oenone. Take pity on my jealous hate. Aricia must die."⁹⁰ But Phaedra has no time and no means in which to kill Aricia, or harm her in any way. As she admits, if she were to have Theseus hurt her, he would know that Hippolytus does love Aricia and that Phaedra has lied to him.⁹¹ Phaedra realizes that there is nothing left to live for and that the truth will eventually come out. Moreover, her love does not return her affection but loves another. Phaedra, who can't bring herself to place the blame where it belongs, chooses instead to blame Oenone. She says that Oenone has ruined her, saying

⁸⁸ Racine (62).

⁸⁹ Racine (78-79).

⁹⁰ Racine (83).

⁹¹ Racine (83).

that Oenone has “poured poison in my ear.”⁹² However, Oenone only gave her mistress advice; it was Phaedra who confessed her love and Phaedra who allowed Oenone to accuse him. Although Oenone accused Hippolytus of the deed, Phaedra knew of the plan before it was launched and could have stopped it. But she did not, and rather than hate herself for her misdeeds, she passes them on to her nurse.⁹³

In the end it is Phaedra who clears Hippolytus’ name; but Theseus has already begun to suspect the truth. Theseus can’t allow himself to believe the crime he has committed so he is blind to all the warnings he sees; however the realization begins to sink in. He can’t accept the truth and begs Phaedra not to tell him, for it would hurt too much.⁹⁴ The truth already known, Phaedra goes ahead and tells Theseus that she was in fact the guilty party, for she has already taken a poison,⁹⁵ so there is nothing for her to lose. But even in her confession she places the blame onto her nurse; a dishonorable character to the end, Phaedra deserts the mother-like figure in order to save something of her own dignity.⁹⁶

Racine’s Phaedra has time to reflect upon her actions, if even for a few hours where Euripides’ Phaedra does not. Herein lies a major difference between the two characters. Euripides’ Phaedra casts the accusation of rape onto Hippolytus minutes after she has learned of his knowledge and rejection of her love. Arguably, perhaps if she had had the opportunity she would have found another alternative. But even if she did not change her actions, Euripides’ Phaedra killed herself to save her children and their

⁹² Racine (84).

⁹³ Turnell states in his analysis of the play that at least one critic claims that the play ends here at this point. (243).

⁹⁴ Racine (103).

⁹⁵ For a discussion on poison and its role in the play, see Turnell (273).

⁹⁶ Racine (104).

reputation. Racine's Phaedra has much more time to consider her rejection, and even after Hippolytus is repulsed she still has hope of seducing him. Where Euripides' Phaedra blames herself, the Phaedra in Racine's play is not able to do the same.

Although Racine has attempted to make his Phaedra a more honorable character, he has failed. Also, by Racine attempting to make Oenone the guilty one he has likewise failed. As Karydas argues the Nurse in *Hippolytus* is very much in control of her situation.⁹⁷ Roisman, on the other hand, believes that the Nurse is subject to Phaedra's manipulations, which actually seems to be more the case in Racine's play than in Euripides'. Therefore, although Roisman's argument concerning Phaedra's manipulation would be on target in Racine's work, when applying them to Euripides' play they fall short. Moreover, Karydas, in her analysis of the Nurse in *Hippolytus*, seems to have a better grasp on Euripides' character.

IV. Shades of Theseus

Racine also attempted to alter Theseus's⁹⁸ character by making him appear a less violent character than in the two earlier versions, hoping that in doing this Theseus would become a more sympathetic character to the audience.⁹⁹ However, in trying to accomplish this Racine makes Theseus an even more violent character; that is, Racine has accomplished the reverse of what he intended.¹⁰⁰ In the Senecan and Euripidean versions

⁹⁷ Karydas (Chapter 3).

⁹⁸ According to Turnell (241), Spitzer argues that Theseus is the most important character in the play. Spitzer, L. "Die klassische Dampfung in Racines Stil" (135-268) *Romanische Stil-und Literaturstudien*, I, Marburg a. Lhan: N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931.

⁹⁹ Racine (4).

¹⁰⁰ Strauss, Barry S. *Fathers and Sons in Athens*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993. For a discussion of the versions of the myth involving Theseus and his character see Chapter 4.

Hippolytus is accused of violating his stepmother, but Racine's Theseus does not go so far as to accuse his son of that, but of merely *intending* to violate her.

In Racine's play Theseus returns expecting to be welcomed by his wife with open arms; however, he no sooner enters than she, talking in riddles, excuses herself¹⁰¹ from his presence.¹⁰² Directly following the scene with Phaedra, Hippolytus enters; whereupon Hippolytus tells Theseus that he will be leaving the kingdom.¹⁰³ Theseus, having been away, is profoundly confused by these greetings from his relatives. Hippolytus states that "I never sought her [Phaedra]" which Theseus believes is said in regard to Hippolytus' dislike of his stepmother; the audience on the other hand knows the real meaning attached to his words.¹⁰⁴ Although Hippolytus will not denounce Phaedra, he does inadvertently tell his father of his innocence in this passage. Also in his speech Hippolytus reveals the admiration he has for his father, which is not apparent in the ancient versions. Theseus is little concerned with anything Hippolytus has to say, as Theseus is more focused on Phaedra's insinuation that someone has wronged him. He asks Hippolytus about the crime against him, but Hippolytus leaves the question for Phaedra to answer. Here Theseus has already assumed that by his son's silence he must be guilty, "You're silent. Is my own son, if you please, in some alliance with my enemies? I shall go in, and end this maddening doubt. Both crime and culprit must be rooted out, and Phaedra tell why she is so distraught."¹⁰⁵ Theseus seems predisposed to believe the worst of his son.¹⁰⁶ Although Racine's Hippolytus spoke with him longer

¹⁰¹ Weinberg suggests that Phaedra does not confess here out of her fear of Theseus (244).

¹⁰² Racine, (62).

¹⁰³ Racine (63).

¹⁰⁴ Racine (63).

¹⁰⁵ Racine (65).

¹⁰⁶ Grube, G.M.A. *The Drama of Euripides*. London: Methuen, 1941. Page 188. Grube points out that Theseus knows what power Aphrodite has over young men, for he himself has been victim to that very

than his wife upon his return, he doubts Hippolytus. He leaves Hippolytus to question his wife; however, first he finds Oenone.

Oenone has revealed her story to Theseus, but Theseus initially has doubts: “Why too did Phaedra make no prompt complaint? Was it to spare the culprit?”¹⁰⁷ Logically, this woman who had just been accosted would flee to her husband for protection, but she chose to avoid him. Theseus displays his doubts here momentarily but believes Oenone when she finishes her tale. Hippolytus enters at this moment and Theseus immediately slings accusations against him. Hippolytus is confused at first by these insults because they are ambiguous. Hippolytus is forced to ask Theseus to explain. Here is one of Racine’s most prominent changes in his version for Theseus does not accuse Hippolytus of rape as he did in the ancient versions. Theseus accuses Hippolytus of attempting to seduce Phaedra: “Now that your vile, unnatural love has led you even to attempt your father’s bed, how dare you show your hated self to me.”¹⁰⁸ Although Racine believes this change makes Theseus a more sympathetic character it does not; what this shift accomplishes is a weakened Theseus whom the audience can’t respect.

I could suggest that Theseus’ rather limited accusation suggests that he was not extremely convinced of his son’s guilt. Perhaps he meant only to test his son, make the accusation so as to ascertain the son’s response. Theseus’ doubt of Phaedra’s claim supports that; although he outwardly seems to believe the crime has been committed as the story tells, inwardly he can’t internalize the idea. At some level he knows the real

power. Perhaps Theseus believes that if he were placed in the same situation as Hippolytus, he would have had relations with his stepmother. Strauss points out in his essay that Euripides’ Theseus is incapable of understanding the purity of his son because of his own past (167-168). But there are many other articles written on the estranged relationship between this father and son. For more information see the following sources quoted by Roisman: Winnington-Ingram (183); Devereux (20, 145); Segal, (160-162).

¹⁰⁷ Racine (69).

¹⁰⁸ Racine (71).

truth, but he can't bring himself to believe that his wife could be lying. As indicated before, he is predisposed to doubt his son and believe his wife. Theseus mockingly accuses his son,

“Scoundrel, you thought that Phaedra'd be afraid to tell of the depraved assault you made. You should have wrested from her hands the hilt of the sharp sword that points now to your guilt; or, better, crowned your outrage of my wife by robbing her at once of speech and life.”¹⁰⁹

But if Theseus were to examine his own argument he would realize that what he says only proves his son's innocence. For if Hippolytus were guilty of such a crime he would assume that his stepmother (who has already been proven to hate him by his previous banishment which she instigated) would accuse him. Therefore, he would wrest his sword away from her. Hippolytus would presumably have little or no problem reclaiming his sword from Phaedra. And if he were guilty of the crime and he suspected that she was going to accuse him, would he not attempt to kill her? If he has already committed such a crime, would one more make a difference?

Theseus is blinded by love for his wife, he thinks that she is the most beautiful wife imaginable, so he can easily believe Hippolytus is attracted to her. Even when Hippolytus offers his love for Aricia as part of his defense, Theseus cannot believe him. He banishes his son and then, alone, he reflects upon his proclamation,

“Poor wretch, the path you take will end in blood. What Neptune swore by Styx, that darkest flood which frights the Gods themselves, he'll surely do. And none escapes when vengeful Gods pursue. I loved you; and in spite of what you've done, I mourn your coming agonies, my son. But you have all too well deserved my curse. When was a father ever outraged worse? Just Gods, who see this grief which drives me wild, how could I father such a wicked child?”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Racine (73).

¹¹⁰ Racine (77).

Racine has tried to make Theseus a more sympathetic, gentler character here but he fails. If Theseus really believed his son guilty, he would be in too much of a rage at this point to reflect upon his 'poor' son's fate. It shows that Theseus has banished his son in sound mind having really thought about the curses he has hurled at his son.

Euripides' Theseus behaves in a much more violent manner towards Hippolytus; however, he is viewed overall as a more gentle character. This Theseus has just learned of the death of his wife and is crushed by the news. Moreover, in his state of grief he learns that she has killed herself because she has been raped. Where Racine's Theseus believes Oenone's word over his son's without questioning Phaedra, Euripides' Theseus has what he takes to be physical proof of Hippolytus' guilt, his wife's body. Euripides' Theseus is acting in a blind rage, partly from grief, shock, and anger at the situation he finds himself in. Moreover, in Euripides' *Hippolytus* Theseus does not reflect on the curses he has passed onto his son, but simply makes them before he exits.¹¹¹ Between Theseus' exit and his re-entrance, Hippolytus has been wounded and is dying. When the messenger brings Theseus the news of Hippolytus' accident, Theseus declares "Bad news that pleases me: sufferings of the man I've come to hate...and yet, and yet, I mustn't forget my filiality to the gods and that he was my son; which leaves me neither glad nor sad."¹¹² While Racine's Theseus is upset that his son is going to meet with many hardships, Euripides' Theseus has no such feeling. The reason is that Racine's Theseus subconsciously doubts his son's guilt, whereas the Euripidean Theseus in his blind rage really believes in his son's guilt.

¹¹¹ Euripides (86).

¹¹² Euripides (92).

In Euripides' version, the chorus asks Theseus to "cancel that prayer" to Poseidon requesting Hippolytus' punishment.¹¹³ Racine has a similar request made on Hippolytus' behalf, but it is Phaedra who utters this plea.¹¹⁴ Racine's Theseus pays no attention to Phaedra's attempt to save Hippolytus; he is so determined that Hippolytus is guilty he cannot bring himself to recognize any evidence that might prove the contrary. But Euripides' chorus has no real bearing on any action in the play; they are women of Troezen, outsiders, commoners that can easily be discarded by the king. But for Racine's Theseus to discard the first speech from his wife since the accusation, he clearly does not wish to see the truth.

Racine's Theseus only begins outwardly to doubt his previous actions when he talks with Aricia.¹¹⁵ Theseus begins by taunting her, saying that she has captured the heart of Hippolytus where everyone else failed. She admits this, proudly. Theseus says that she cannot trust Hippolytus because he is a "fickle lover" and that she should have ensured that he would not stray.¹¹⁶ She attempts to defend Hippolytus, but Theseus continues to defend his prior decision. It is only when Aricia says that she must depart, or else reveal something she has promised Hippolytus she will not that Theseus begins to openly doubt his earlier judgment.¹¹⁷ Aricia leaves, and alone Theseus questions himself,

"What does she mean? These speeches, which begin and then break off – what, are they keeping in? In this some sham those two have figured out? Have they conspired to torture me with doubt? But I myself, despite my stern control – what plaintative voice cries from my inmost soul? I feel a secret pity, a surge of pain.

¹¹³ Euripides (79).

¹¹⁴ Racine (78).

¹¹⁵ It is interesting to note here that in both Racine's and Euripides' play the accusations can only be dispelled by women, Aricia then Phaedra and Artemis respectively. The accusations made by women (Phaedra and Oenone) cannot be refuted by any male character, for Theseus chooses not to listen to Hippolytus or the messengers, but only to the women characters.

¹¹⁶ Racine (94).

¹¹⁷ Racine (95).

Oenone must be questioned once again. I'll have more light on this. Not all is known. Guards, go and bring Oenone here, alone."¹¹⁸

The voice, which cries from the inmost soul, is the voice that has been trying to surface all along, the voice which knows that Hippolytus is innocent. He wants to question Oenone again; and not Phaedra he wants to question.¹¹⁹ Learning of Oenone's death he seems prepared to hear the truth,

"Oenone's dead? And Phaedra wants to die? O bring back my son, and let him clear his name! If he'll but speak, I now will hear. O Neptune, let your gifts not be conferred too swiftly; let my prayers go unheard. Too much I've trusted what may be true, too quickly raised my cruel hands to you. How I'd despair if what I asked were done."¹²⁰

But it is too late for Theseus to hear the truth from his son's lips, for Hippolytus is dead. Realizing that his son has passed away, Theseus does not desire the truth to come to light any longer. Instead, his wishes to deny the truth, in order to save himself from his guilt,

"Well, Madam, my son's no more; you have won the day! Ah, but what qualms I feel! What doubts torment my heart, and plead that he was innocent! But, Madam, claim your victim. He is dead. Enjoy his death, unjust or merited. I'm willing to be evermore deceived. You've called him guilty; let it be believed. His death is grief enough for me to bear without my further probing this affair."¹²¹

But despite Theseus' wishes he is told the truth, and forced to come to terms with his guilt. However, his reaction and anguish is not really felt by the audience because the play ends so abruptly.

¹¹⁸ Racine (96).

¹¹⁹ It is interesting to note that here Theseus calls Oenone, not his wife. Logically if Theseus wanted to know if Hippolytus had propositioned his wife, would he not question her? Perhaps Racine is here recalling Euripides' version where Theseus can't question his wife because she is dead.

¹²⁰ Racine (98).

¹²¹ Racine (103).

Euripides' *Hippolytus* ends quite differently; the ending is more drawn out so that the audience sees Theseus' realization of his son's innocence and proof of his own personal agony. After learning the details of Hippolytus' death Theseus sends the messenger to retrieve his son's body because "I want with my own eye to see the man who would not confess to ravishing my wife. I want to pronounce over him the ineluctable sentence of the gods."¹²² This Theseus still truly believes that his son is guilty, although Walker disagrees.¹²³ This Theseus would continue believing Phaedra if Artemis did not descend on Theseus to declare the truth. Theseus is shocked by all the Artemis reveals claiming that he deserves death for his actions.¹²⁴ As Hippolytus is brought back and placed on stage, Theseus apologizes to his son, so that the audience is able to see how grieved he is over his actions, "In ruin, my son. Life has no more joys for me...Would that I were dying, my child, instead of you. Curse that cursed prayer! I wish it had never left my lips."¹²⁵ The broken Theseus realizes his hand in the "murder" of his son and regrets his hand in it, apologizing to Hippolytus.¹²⁶ Where Racine's Theseus is guilty of not hearing or seeing the truth that subconsciously he knew, the Euripides' Theseus is innocent as Artemis reveals:

"What you did was criminal, nevertheless, there is a way for you to be forgiven. It was Aphrodite, after all, in a spurge of hate, who made this whole disaster come to pass...As to your vicious blunder, first this: ignorance acquits you. Next, your wife by dying made it impossible to disprove her charge, and so she forced your credence. Finally in all this tragedy, you [Theseus] are the one who suffers most."¹²⁷

¹²² Euripides (92).

¹²³ Walker, Henry J. *Theseus and Athens*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1995. Walker argues that Theseus' remorse over his son's death proves that he already knows of his son's innocence; however, while Euripides' Theseus admits his remorse because he did love his son, nonetheless he still believes that his son is guilty. It is Racine's Theseus who knows of Hippolytus' innocence before it is declared. (116).

¹²⁴ Euripides (95).

¹²⁵ Euripides (97).

¹²⁶ Euripides (99).

¹²⁷ Euripides (95).

But in Racine's play it is Aricia who suffers the most by Hippolytus' death, not Theseus because one does not see the suffering in Racine's play that one does in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Finally, Hippolytus forgives his father at the urging of Artemis, because as Artemis says it was Hippolytus' destiny to die in that way.¹²⁸ As Walker notes, Euripides' play ends rather calmly with Theseus being forgiven by Hippolytus and also the "violent disorders of the tragedy end in the calm acceptance of the civic norms that Phaedra had desired for her sons."¹²⁹ Racine's play does not have such a smooth ending, as Hippolytus has not directly forgiven his father and by Theseus adopting Aricia, the fate of Phaedra's sons is uncertain.

Euripides, by having both Artemis and Hippolytus forgive Theseus, softens his character. Where Racine was influenced by the cruelty of Seneca's Theseus, he tried to soften the character. Euripides' Theseus out of rage banishes his son, believing his son has committed a foul act; he admittedly believes this until divine intervention shows otherwise. Although Racine tried to soften Theseus, that was not the end result. Racine's Theseus seems to know all along that his son is innocent, but can't admit to himself that his wife would betray him in such a way. By having Theseus accuse his son of attempting to seduce Phaedra, Racine eliminates the rage, which is the driving force of Euripides' Theseus. Without that element of anger Racine's Theseus appears to put more thought into his decision, therefore making his decision to banish Hippolytus appear more calculated. What Racine tried to do with this character, Euripides actually succeeded in doing and Racine failed. But here Racine has not failed in all respects; he

¹²⁸ Euripides (99).

¹²⁹ Walker (125).

claimed to have wanted to make the audience more sympathetic towards Theseus than in Euripides' and Seneca's versions. Where the Euripidean Theseus is more sympathetic than Racine's, Seneca's Theseus is less sympathetic. So where Racine fails in one aspect, he succeeds in another.

V. Hippolytus of Old and the Hippolytus of New

Racine observed that the character of Hippolytus

“was reproached among the Ancients for having depicted him as a philosopher free of all imperfections: the result of which was the death of the young prince caused far more indignation than pity. I thought it best to give him some frailty which would render him slightly guilty toward his father, without however detracting in any way from that greatness of soul which leads him to spare Phaedra's honor...”¹³⁰

Here, Racine succeeds in capturing what he intended with his play, for his Hippolytus becomes a very sympathetic character for the audience.¹³¹ Where Euripides' Hippolytus appears cold and distant from his first entrance; Racine's does not. Euripides' Hippolytus outwardly dislikes Aphrodite and everything she represents.¹³² Also present in Euripides' play are the class distinctions and Hippolytus' use of them, which make Hippolytus appear even more arrogant. He orders around his men and disregards the warnings of the Retainer.¹³³ But Racine's Hippolytus treats Theramenes with respect, and values his opinions, even if he does not agree with them.¹³⁴ Although this may be due to differences in the culture and the treatment of the servant class, nonetheless to a modern audience

¹³⁰ Racine (4).

¹³¹ For a comparison between Hippolytus and Pheidippides and Hippolytus, and Hippolytus and Alcibiades see Strauss, (166-167 and 170-175 respectively). Strauss also proposes that Euripides modeled the character of Hippolytus on the character of the well known Athenian Alcibiades.

¹³² Euripides 51-52.

¹³³ Euripides (52).

there is a striking difference. Seemingly, since Racine alters this scene, he consciously modified his scene from Euripides' play in hopes of making Hippolytus seem more sympathetic to the audience.

Racine modifies this scene in more than one aspect; Hippolytus is concerned that his father has not returned and wishes to personally lead a search for him.¹³⁵ Racine has Hippolytus caring about his father, and for his father's opinions, which is not evident in Euripides' play. Moreover, in this scene Hippolytus confesses his love for Aricia¹³⁶ to Theramenes. Hippolytus is not guiltless in this love, for he believes that his love is betraying his father. However, Theramenes reminds Hippolytus that it was her brother that committed the crime against Theseus, not Aricia¹³⁷ herself. This instance introduces another whole dimension to Racine's play that was not present in either of the earlier versions. Where Hippolytus and Theramenes are sympathetic towards Aricia because she did not commit any crimes, Theseus punishes her for her brother's crime. This accomplishes two different things; it makes Hippolytus into a likeable hero where it makes Theseus appear more villainous. But Hippolytus, despite this argument offered to him, is determined not to pursue his love, for it would be wrong.

Racine's Hippolytus appears noble in other scenes, as he has a strong sense of duty. Although Phaedra was the reason he was banished from home, he still has respect for her out of his sense of duty, as he goes to tell her of his leaving the kingdom even

¹³⁴ Racine (9-14).

¹³⁵ Racine, (9-10).

¹³⁶ In his analysis Weinberg states that Aricia's main purpose in the play is to make Phaedra jealous so that when she is ready to confess, her fit of jealousy silences her. I feel that here Weinberg is incorrect in this statement. Although Aricia is a means to prevent Phaedra's confession, she is more importantly a means in which Racine softens Hippolytus' character (267). Weinberg later adds that Aricia also serves as a line of defense in Hippolytus' speech to Theseus. He adds that Aricia is also a way to end the play with an alliance between Hippolytus and Theseus (269-270).

though he did not have to perform such an act.¹³⁸ However, before he finds Phaedra he sees Oenone who reveals that Phaedra does not wish to be seen. Honoring Phaedra's wishes, he departs.

Hippolytus appears next with Aricia after having his father's death announced. He believes that Aricia's claim to the throne is greater than his or his stepbrother. His unselfishness demonstrates his fair attitude, making him a hero. After he has told Aricia that he will support her claim to the throne, he confesses his love for her.¹³⁹ Unlike the scene where Phaedra tells of her love for Hippolytus, Hippolytus accidentally begins to tell Aricia of his love for her and from there is forced to tell all. The mere language of Hippolytus' confession is not sexual as in Phaedra's speech, but he simply explains how he has been tortured by his forbidden love. His speech is spoken in an "unknown tongue" because he knows nothing of love, where Phaedra's speech is not one of innocence.

When Phaedra and Hippolytus meet, he tries to console her over Theseus' death, despite the fact that she has always mistreated him. Again the audience is presented with a caring Hippolytus, one that is loving and forgiving. Because he is so innocent he believes her sexual descriptions are indeed about her husband, and he is shocked to find out that he is the object of her desire. The innocent Hippolytus can't bear to remain in Phaedra's presence after she has attempted to seduce him, so he leaves her. Although he knows that Phaedra's actions are wrong and should be divulged, he believes that Phaedra should make the confession herself. For this reason, and the fact that he does not want to

¹³⁷ Turnell argues in his analysis that Aricia is the only pure character in the play, that is she is the only character without a flaw (255).

¹³⁸ Racine (14).

¹³⁹ Racine (36-37).

humiliate his father by being the one to announce such a crime, Hippolytus keeps silent and seals his own doom.¹⁴⁰ His sense of honor is what the audience responds to and loves about this character. In his final scene with Aricia, he promises to marry her so that she will remain an honored woman.¹⁴¹ Where Euripides' Hippolytus hates women, he cannot be seen as sympathetic because he is so cruel.¹⁴² Racine successfully softens the arrogant character in his version, as in the two ancient versions Hippolytus is arrogant to where he is cold. However, Roisman argues that Hippolytus was not the asexual misogynist we may believe, rather that his desire is for Artemis.¹⁴³ If Hippolytus did desire Artemis, would not the Greek audience take offense at a youth lusting after a virginal goddess? If Roisman is right in this assumption, could Hippolytus' lust for Artemis perhaps be a reason that he would veil himself in the first play? However, if Euripides' wanted Hippolytus to be lusting after another woman why not do as Racine and Virgil did and create one?¹⁴⁴ It seems more plausible that after reading Racine's play, Roisman, and others, cannot help but see that perhaps Artemis and Hippolytus desired each other; however, it is not possible to assume any more of their relationship as the influence of Racine's play has affected the original reading of Hippolytus' and Artemis' relationship.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Racine (89).

¹⁴¹ Racine (90).

¹⁴² Euripides (69-71).

¹⁴³ Roisman, Chapter 2. Roisman claims that the Greek audience would not have responded to an asexual male in the play. Artemis, although a virginal goddess, is also associated with procreation, which allows for her to be torn between sexuality and purity. Strauss also comments on the virtuous male in Athens (168).

¹⁴⁴ Virgil, *The Aeneid*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Book III, 187-188).

¹⁴⁵ Strauss argues that Hippolytus' "sex drive is forced underground by deep Oedipal fear to reemerge in repressed form as attachment to a non-threatening virginal goddess" (169). In Racine's play, Hippolytus is not 'afraid' to love someone, but, if Strauss is correct, he is afraid in Euripides' version. Therefore, it can be assumed that the relationship between father and son in Racine's play is a stronger relationship. If Racine's characters have a more stable relationship, then Theseus banishing his son becomes more severe.

Racine fails to change the perceptions of Phaedra, Oenone, and Theseus, but he succeeds in altering the way Hippolytus is viewed. So why does he succeed in one aspect and fail in the other? First, by making Hippolytus a nicer, humbler, more likeable character Racine makes those who bring about his death appear evil. Secondly, Racine in the text conjures up images of both Euripides' and Seneca's Hippolytus. That is, Racine incorporates their versions of the Hippolytus' character in his play to make the Hippolytus character in his version the most complete character. Both Euripides' and Seneca's Hippolytus are filled with hate towards women, which makes them both very one-dimensional. However, in Racine's work he uses the previous sketches of Hippolytus and incorporates them into his play, building upon their character to complete him.

The first mention of the 'old' Hippolytus is from his confidant, Theramenes. Interestingly, the notice of the change in character comes from the parallel character in the Euripides' play who warns Hippolytus about spurning love. Theramenes questioned Hippolytus about why he hated and wanted to flee from Aricia. When Hippolytus answers that it is not because he hates her that he needs to escape her, Theramenes observes,

"Dare I surmise, then, why you're leaving us? Are you no longer that Hippolytus who spurned love's dictates and refused with scorn the yoke which Theseus has so often borne? Has Venus, long offended by your pride, contrived to see her Theseus justified by making you confess her power divine and bow, like other me, before her shrine?"¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Racine (11).

Since the play has just begun Theramenes cannot be referring to any previous actions that have taken place, but here Racine through Theramenes is directly referring to the two ancient versions of the play.

Perhaps more important than Theramenes' referring to the previous versions of the play is Aricia's own acknowledgement of the previous version of Hippolytus, "Isn't the man's cold nature known to you? What makes you think that, scorning women, he will yet show pity and respect to me? He long has shunned us, and as you well know haunts just those places where we do not go."¹⁴⁷ Hippolytus himself also acknowledges this change in his character, "I wince to think how I, Love's enemy, long disdained its bonds, and all whom passion had enchained; how...I am not like as before."¹⁴⁸ Also in his conversation with his father he once again references his past, "It is for that Hippolytus is known in Greece—for virtue cold and hard as stone. By harsh austerity I am set apart."¹⁴⁹ Hippolytus again recalls Euripides' version of the hardened Hippolytus, contrasting himself to the earlier version. He, himself, acknowledges the change in his personality.

Oenone seems to see in Hippolytus not Racine's Hippolytus, but the Hippolytus in the two earlier versions. Racine's Hippolytus does not hurl insults upon Phaedra; he simply does not accept her advances. However, Oenone describes his treatment of Phaedra as, "But if an insult ever roused your spleen, how can you pardon his disdainful mien. How stonily, and with what cold conceit he saw you all but grovel at his feet! Oh,

¹⁴⁷ Racine (33).

¹⁴⁸ Note that here in this passage 'Lo

but his arrogance was rude and raw! Why did not Phaedra see the man I saw?"¹⁵⁰ Racine's Hippolytus did not chastise Phaedra for her actions as did Euripides' Hippolytus. Interestingly, here Oenone seems to be referring to her counterpart's interaction with Hippolytus in Euripides' play. Where Racine's Phaedra wants to believe that it was the shock that made Hippolytus react in such a way, Oenone knows of his "savage hate for womankind."¹⁵¹ It is only after Phaedra realizes that he is in love with Aricia that she acknowledges that he is "The savage creature no one could subdue, who scorned regard, who heard no lover's pleas."¹⁵²

VI. Conclusion

In her novel, Rhys acknowledges Bronte's work and incorporates it into her own; making both plots entwined. Reading these plays becomes very complicated, as the plots become twisted together in such a way that one cannot help but at certain places in one play, recall the other. Because of this influence it is impossible to ever recapture the pure reading; that is, although one might try to avoid it, Racine's play influences our understanding of Euripides' and vice versa. Racine, being influenced by what he thought Euripides did in his play, reacted to that. However, as Bloom suggests in regard to other artists, Racine too misreads Euripides and consequently Euripides' play comes closer to Racine's intent than his own. Racine only succeeds in reading himself and Euripides correctly when he incorporates both plots in his play through his Hippolytus character. Racine in trying to drastically change Phaedra, Oenone, and Theseus from Euripides, succeeded in accomplishing just the opposite.

¹⁵⁰ Racine (55).

¹⁵¹ Racine (55)
¹⁵² Racine (81)

Annotated Bibliography

Conacher, D.J. Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme, and Structure. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.

Along with discussing the structure of the play this text addresses the role of the Chorus with *Hippolytus*. The chorus was a character in the play and its role is extremely important in Greek Drama. The French version, however, is without a chorus.

Euripides, Hippolytus, ed. by W.S. Barrett. New York: Oxford, 1964.

This has a useful introduction to the play. Furthermore, even though the book is primarily a detailed commentary on the Greek text, it has many interesting things to say about particular lines or general themes within the play.

Flowers, Mary Lynne. Sentence Structure and Characterization in the Tragedies of Jean Racine. New Jersey, Associated University Press, 1979.

In studying the text of the play, the diction cannot be ignored. Since I am not reading it in French, it is important to know how my translation changed the language and the sound of the work. If it did not alter the style it is important to recognize this in order to get a true feeling of the work so that I may compare it to the rhythm and style of the Greek work.

Gill, Christopher. "The Articulation of Self In Euripides *Hippolytus*." Euripides, Women, and Sexuality. Ed. Anton Powell. New York: Routledge, 1990.

The article focuses on the reflective speeches of the characters and the insight, which they have into their own characters. Perhaps the more reflexive characters are part of a more self-aware society.

Goldman, Lucien. Racine. Trans. Alastair Hamilton. Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1981.

The book outlines Racine's life and in doing so reveals much about the age and society in which he lived. The book also compares Racine's works to each other. It discusses Racine's characters and scenes in *Phaedra*, which, according to this author are strikingly similar to scenes in some of Racine's other works.

Karydas, Helen Pournara. Eurykleia and her Successors: Female Figures of Authority in Greek Poetics. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

This has an extended section (pp. 115-180) on the figure of the Nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

Knapp, Bettina L. Jean Racine: Mythos and Renewal in Modern Theater. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1971.

Not only does this text comment on how *Phaedra* was received, but it also compares the two plays. More specifically it deals with the changing of characters from Euripides version to the Racine version of the myth.

March, Jennifer. "Euripides the Misogynist?" Euripides, Women, and Sexuality. Ed. Anton Powell. New York: Routledge, 1990.

In order to compare his work to Racine's it is necessary to know how *Hippolytus* compares to his other plays, in that are the scenes and relations the norm in Greek Drama. If so, do those themes also appear in *Phaedra*, if not why.

Michelini, Ann Norris. Euripides and the Tragic Tradition. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

This text brings to light several important issues. Most importantly, it discusses the second version of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Which version was more similar to *Phaedra*, the first or second? Also, which version was received better by the

Greek audiences, why, and how does that compare to *Phaedra*? The book also discusses Euripides' reception as a playwright now and then, along with a comparison of his other works.

Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context.
Edited by John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University, 1990.

This is a very important recent collection of essays on the social context of Greek drama and discusses many important features of the plays and the civic and religious rituals, which accompany the production of the plays.

Poole, William. "Male Homosexuality in Euripides." Euripides, Women, and Sexuality. Ed. Anton Powell. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Racine creates a character in *Phaedra* who is not present in *Hippolytus*, a woman whom Hippolytus loves. This article offers opinions on the homoerotic tones that may or may not exist in Euripides' version of the myth. How apparent are the tones and would Racine have recognized them? If so, is this why he added the other character? Which society would have been more open to homosexuality?

Rehm, Rush. Greek Tragic Theater. New York: Routledge, 1998.

The plays in Greece were performed in conjunction with a festival, the City Dionysia. This book is help in examining the context in which plays were produced. Only by understanding the ritual can one begin to understand the heart of Greek Drama.

Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin. Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1993.

This has several chapters on characters and themes in the *Hippolytus*. Chapter 5 (pp. 155-172) is entitled "Sacrificial Son and Vengeful Destroyer: Hippolytus and Phaedra." Chapter Six (pp. 173-188) is entitled "Renegotiating the

Oedipus: Theseus and Hippolytus." This book uses feminist theory to reassess the roles of women in Euripides' plays. The *Hippolytus* features prominently in the analysis and the chapters have many interesting and unusual things to say about the play.

Roisman, Hanna M. Nothing Is As It Seems: The Tragedy of the Implicit in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

This text addresses Euripides' different versions of *Hippolytus* and theories on why one was more popular with the Athenian audience. It also explores the relationships of the characters in the play. Moreover it addresses the issue of the tragic flaw of the heroes within the play, a crucial element in Greek Drama.

Seaford, Richard. "The Structural Problems of Marriage in Euripides." Euripides, Women, and Sexuality. Ed. Anton Powell. New York: Routledge, 1990.

The article will help me compare the marriages and their structures within Euripides work. How is marriage portrayed in *Hippolytus* and are the portrayals an accurate reflection of fears and ideals held within Greek society? How do they compare to those in *Phaedra* and in French society?

Steiner, George. "Tragedy, Pure and Simple." This is an essay (pp. 534-546) from a book entitled Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theater and Beyond. Edited by M.S. Silk. New York: Oxford University, 1996.

In this essay, Steiner tries to discover commonalities in different tragedies which span from Euripides to Racine and beyond. There is some interesting discussion of Racine as presenting "absolute" tragedies on the stage.

The Context of Ancient Drama. Ed. By Eric Csapo and William J. Slater. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.

The book provides information about the audiences of ancient Greece as well as the actors. In comparing the two plays and time periods it is important to compare the two types of audiences as theater plays to its audience. Without an audience there would be no theatre, so in writing about the play one cannot ignore this major factor.

Wheatley, Katherine Earnistine. Racine and English Classicism. Austin: University of Texas, 1956.

This book gives insight into how Racine was received, more importantly how *Phaedra* was received. Just as it is important to analyze *Hippolytus*' reception by its audiences, it is just as important to examine how Racine was accepted.

Wilkins, John. "The state and the Individual: Euripides' Play of Voluntary Self – Sacrifice." Ed. Anton Powell. New York: Routledge, 1990.

The article examines several of Euripides' plays in which a young character sacrifices him/herself for the good of the state or society. What does this say about Greek society and how does it compare to that of the French society and the lack of self-sacrifice in *Phaedra*?

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